



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

trials be approved and confirmed, this is so far from proving a discouragement to its use, that we ought to regard the discovery of such a one as a valuable acquisition to the province of physic, especially if it is applicable in desperate and obstinate cases. The *Bella-donna*, on the contrary, supposing future trials should prove it as happily successful as Professor Lambergen has experienced it, is a medicine of a different kind; inasmuch as its operation is mild, when compared with that, which attends the exhibition of many others: we should therefore have double reason to rejoice at the discovery.

---

XIII. *An Account of some of the Antiquities discovered at Herculaneum, &c. In a Letter to Thomas Birch, D.D. Secret. R. S. By John Nixon, A.M. F. R. S.*

Reverend Sir,

Read Feb. 24, 1757. **T**HE subject of this letter are some cursory observations made by me last spring, upon viewing the curiosities found at Herculaneum, and the places adjacent. I deferred putting them into any order, till I came to town, and had seen, by perusing the Transactions of the Royal Society, whether some abler hand had not already prevented me, and made any further communication needless: but as I now find, that no notice has been hitherto taken of several particulars, which, in my  
humble

humble opinion, deserved it, as tending to throw new light upon antiquity; I beg leave to trouble you with my thoughts upon them.

I shall begin with the museum in the King of the Two Sicilies' palace at Portici; wherein, amongst a great number of other ancient and valuable remains, are these that follow, *viz.*

## I.

Several *tali lusorii*. The *tali* are supposed to have been known to the Greeks (1) by the name of Ἀτραγάλοι as early as the Trojan war. But as the monuments before us are undoubtedly Roman, I shall confine my remarks upon them to the usages received among that people; and being guided partly by what appears upon the face of these antiquities, and partly by what the Latin classics have delivered in general upon this subject, beg leave to observe, in the first place, that the *tali* had each of them but four sides, two broader, and the other two more narrow, on which they would ordinarily rest; as the rounding of their ends did not easily permit them to stand upon those parts. However, the possibility of such a position (tho' it did not occur to me to make the experiment with these pieces) may be deduced from a passage in Tully (2).

Further, with regard to the manner of distinguishing the several sides of the *tali*, some learned (3) writers

(1) Hom. Iiad. 23. v. 88.

(2) *Ut enim — si hoc fingamus, esse quasi finem — ita jacere talum, ut rectus assistat; qui ita talus erit jactus, ut cadat rectus* — Cic. de Fin. L. 3. §. 16. Ed. Verb.

(3) Vid. Dacier not. on Hor. L. ii. Od. 7. v. 25, &c.

speaking of it according to ideas taken from the fashion of marking the modern dice, and (I may add) the ancient *tesserae* likewise: but, as I did not observe the traces of any engraving, painting, &c. upon the pieces under consideration, it seems to me more probable, what others assert (4), that this distinction was effected by the different configuration of the sides themselves, and not by any numbers marked upon them. And concerning this notation, the common opinion is, that the appearances expressing *one* and *six*, as also those representing *three* and *four*, were opposed to each other respectively.

But leaving these (however probable) conjectures, we can with certainty determine the number of the *tali* used in this game to have been four; and likewise, that among the various chances resulting from them, the most fortunate one was that, wherein each of the sides exhibited a different aspect. The former of these circumstances we learn from Tully (5), as we do the latter from Martial, who, in a distich sent with a present of a set of *tali* to a friend, says,

*Cum steterit nullus vultu tibi talus eodem,  
Munera me dices magna dedisse tibi* (6).

It may further be collected from Horace, that the throw above described had the appellation of *Venus*: for when he intimates, that the president of the feast was elected by the *tali* (7), he must be supposed to

(4) Τὸ δὲ ἡμίμα τὸ κατὰ τὸ Ἀσράγαλον Πτώματος Ἀείθμῳ Δόξαν εἶχεν. Jul. Pollux. L. ix. c. 7.

(5) *Quatuor tali jacti casu venereum efficiunt.* Cic. de Div. L. i. §. 13. Ed. Verb.

(6) Mart. L. xiv. epig. 14.

(7) *Nec regna vini sortiunt talis.* L. i. od. 4. v. 18.

mean the most favourable chance upon them. But he (8) elsewhere gives us to understand, that the chance, which determined that election, was called *Venus*.

Propertius is somewhat more explicite in assigning the title of this throw, as above; and at the same time informs us further, that the contrary (and consequently most unlucky) one was termed *canes*.

*Me quoque per talos Venerem quærente secundos,  
Semper damnosæ subfluere canes* (9).

Now it seems to be agreed among the antiquaries, (10) that *canis* on the *tali* was unity: and indeed this opinion is countenanced by Persius (11), who contrasts *canicula* with *senio*. If this be admitted, then the *canes* of Propertius must have been the chance, wherein all (or at least the greater number of) the *tali* came up (as we should express it) aces.

There have been several other conjectures proposed by learned writers upon this subject, which I choose to omit, for want of proper authorities from the classics to ascertain them. This is likewise the case with regard to the rules observed by the ancient Romans at this diversion. It is not at all improbable, that as we have several species of games upon the same set of dice, cards, &c. so they might have the same

(8) *Quem Venus arbitrum dicet bibendi?* L. ii. od. 7. v. 25.  
Some think, that this cast was also named *basilicus* from the usage here mentioned. Sanad. in Loc.

(9) Prop. L. iv. el. 9. v. 18.

(10) Jul. Pollux. L. ix. c. 7. Lubin. on Pers. sat. 3. v. 49, &c.

(11) — *Quid dexter senio ferret,  
— Damnosæ canicula quantum*

Raderet ———

Pers. sat. 3. v. 48.

variety on the *tali*: and if there were any laws established by custom for the regulation of this game in public, yet private parties might be at liberty to innovate at pleasure, and agree upon whatever terms of play were most agreeable to their inclinations or circumstances. In this light (according to (12) Erasmus) we are to consider the account, which Augustus gives of himself and his friends, in an epistle to Tiberius (13): *Inter cœnam lusimus γερωντικῶς heri et hodie: talis enim jactatus, ut quisque canem aut senionem miserat, in singulos talos singulos denarios conferebat, quos tollebat universos, qui Venerem jecerat.* And it is obvious to remark, that (upon this hypothesis) the critics, perhaps, need not have been so much embarrassed (as we find they have been) in endeavouring to reconcile this passage of Suetonius with that other of Persius (14) produced above.

I shall conclude with noting, that in order to prevent any fraud or slight of hand in managing the *tali*, it was usual to put them into a box (15), and, after shaking them together, to throw them out upon a table. Thus Martial introduces one of these *turriculæ*, as recommending its own usefulness for the purpose above-mentioned:

*Quærit compositos manus improba mittere talos,  
Qui per me mittit, nil nisi vota facit* (16).

(12) Dial. Ἀσπγγαλισμὸς.

(13) Sueton. C. Aug. §. 71.

(14) Sat. 3. v. 48. See Prat. not. in us. Delph. in loc.

(15) Hor. L. ii. sat. 7. v. 17.

(16) Mart. L. xiv. epig. 16.

However,

However, this caution does not seem to have been so universally observed, but that sometimes, *viz.* when the party consisted of ladies, it was (I presume, for a reason greatly to their honour) superseded. Thus, in one of the first paintings found at Herculaneum, and now in the royal apartments at Portici, we see a young female figure exhibited, as playing at this game, with one or more of the *tali* lying upon the back part of her hand, while the rest appear as having fallen off from thence towards the floor.

## II.

A rule with four joints, each of which contained about 5 inches 9-tenths of our measure. I think there was another in two parts, which answered to the same proportion.

## III.

A weight, inscribed on one side E M E, and on the other H A B E B I S.

## IV.

A small *bolla d'oro*, which (after that in the late Dr. Middleton's collection, and another preserved at Rome) is the third known to be extant in Europe. As this ornament was worn by so great a number of young persons at Rome, and made of gold, which is so capable of resisting the injuries of the weather, moisture, &c. one cannot but wonder at the extreme scarcity of these monuments in the cabinets of the curious. The most probable way of accounting for this (according to (17) Dr. Middleton) is, that the

---

(17) Germ. Ant. Mon. p. 38.

value of the materials, of which these *bullæ* were made, induced the poor labourers, as soon as they had found one, to sell it to the first goldsmith they met with for its real value (however small it might be) by weight.

## V.

A little figure like a Faunus, excepting that about the head it had something of the character of the minotaur, *viz.* large curls upon the forehead, and several muscular protuberances, or *tori*, under the throat.

## VI.

A figure in relievo of a man sitting with a bowl in his hand, which has been thought a Socrates. And indeed the features of the face bear a striking resemblance to those of that sage expressed in ancient monuments; as the bowl might properly refer to the well-known circumstance of his death. But the other insignia are not so suitable to the character of the subject, as one could wish: for he holds, partly in his hand, and partly under his arm, a short staff full of knots, and curved at the end like a shepherd's crook, such as we find borne by satyrs in some Bacchanalian pieces: and the skin of a beast appears hanging from the seat of his chair.

## VII.

An antique painting of a muse, with a *capsula* near her containing some volumes, from which hang labels shewing the titles of the works. The same representation appears in another painting kept in a different part of the palace. Signor Paderni  
observed



observed to me, that these remains would help the curious to form a more certain idea of the manner, in which the ancients affixed titles to their volumes, than they have hitherto been able to obtain. The most complete description, that I can recollect, of an ancient book, with its appurtenances and decorations, is that of Martial addressed to one of his own.

*Faustini fugis in sinum? Sapisti.*

*Cedro nunc licet ambules perunctus,*

*Et frontis gemino decens honore*

*Pictis luxurieris umbilicis :*

*Et te purpura delicata velet,*

*Et cocco rubeat superbus index.* L. iii. ep. 2.

The *superbus index* in the last verse, curiously illuminated with scarlet, was undoubtedly the title of the book ; but to what part of it it was annexed has hitherto been difficult to ascertain : for as (according to the paintings under consideration) it was inscribed on a detached piece of paper or parchment, it must soon have been lost from the book ; especially if the latter had suffered by damp, or any other injuries similar to those, that have affected the volumes found in Herculaneum, of which not only the title, but even the umbilici, tho' consisting of more solid materials, as horn, ivory, &c. are intirely destroyed : so that no light could be had from the original antiquities with relation to this point. The only means, whereby the connoisseurs could form any conjectures in this case, must have been, I presume, from the fashion of books among the ancients, viz. their being long scrolls rolled round upon a stick with ornaments at each end, as described in the epigram

produced

produced above. This form required, that the books should be laid at their length upon the shelves, where they were deposited with either their side, or one of their ends, appearing outwardly. Now of these two positions the latter, which exposed the umbilicus to view, might be thought (all circumstances duly considered) the most convenient. To this part therefore it might with probability be conjectured, that the index or title was fastened; but the paintings mentioned above plainly demonstrate, that it actually was so.

Monf. Dacier says (18), that the titles of books were anciently inscribed upon the leathern covers, wherein they were wrapt, and which, by the means of thongs fastened to them, kept the volumes close and compact together. If that learned gentleman had supported this fact by proper evidences, then it must have been concluded, upon the joint authority of such evidences, and of the antiquities under consideration, that the practice of the ancients was, besides the title on the sides of the volume, to affix another on a label at one of its extremities. And indeed this additional notation (whatever we determine concerning its usefulness, while the books lay on a shelf in a library) must have been very necessary, when such books stood upright in a *capsula* (like those in the painting before us), where no part of them, but one end alone, could possibly be seen.

### VIII.

Some pieces of fine paper, coloured red on one side, and black on the other, found upon the breast

---

(18) Not. on Hor. L. i. ep. 20. v. 2.

of a skeleton. Signor Paderni told me, that they had been viewed with great admiration by such of the virtuosi, as he had shewn them to ; and that their admiration proceeded from those fragments appearing not to be of the *charta papyracea*, but of that of silk, cotton, or linen. And indeed, if they should prove to have been made of any of the materials last mentioned, it would contradict the generally received opinion (according to (19) Montfaucon), that paper of silk or cotton, denoted by the common appellation of *charta bombycina*, was first found out in the 9th century ; as that composed of linen rags (*ex linteolis contritis et aquâ maceratis*, as Pancirollus (20) expresses it) was about the 12th ; and that the former supplied the place of the *charta papyracea* in the east, as the latter superseded the use of it in the western parts of the world.

## IX.

A flat piece of white glass, taken off from towards the extremity of the sheet, as appears from the curvature and protuberant thickness of one of its sides above the other parts. I have several observations by me, with regard to this fragment, which I have not yet had leisure to digest. I shall therefore proceed to the other parts of this collection.

To enter into a detail of the paintings found at Herculaneum, and deposited in a different part of the palace at Portici, would be tedious, as their

(19) Mem. lit. de l'Acad. des Inscrip. V. 9.

(20) Rerum Mem. L. ii. tit. 13.

number, when I saw them, exceeded 800; and it would be superfluous, as the principal of them will soon make their appearance in the world by prints taken from them, and executed in a manner, which (as far as I could judge by the specimens shewn me) will in no-wise discredit the originals, I shall therefore only mention two of them, *viz.*

I.

Theseus with the Minotaur dead, and lying on his back at his feet, while several Athenian youths are embracing the knees, and kissing the hand, of their deliverer. We may observe, that the fabulous being above-mentioned appears in this piece with the intire body of a man, and only the head of a bull, which agrees with the manner, in which he is represented in an antique sardonix of Greek sculpture in the cabinet at Vienna, and in most of the works of the ancient artists. Tho' I have by me the copy of an antique gem, wherein the Minotaur is exhibited as standing in the center of the famous labyrinth, and having below the body of a bull as far as to the waist, and from thence upwards an human form: which representation is further countenanced by Ovid, who describes that monster, as

*Semibovemque virum, semivirumque bovem.*

Art. Am. L. ii. v. 12.

II.

Chiron and Achilles. The latter of these is standing, and has a *plēctrum* in his right hand: the former seems to embrace his noble pupil with his left arm, and with his right hand to strike the lyre, as teach-

ing him to play upon that instrument. But the most remarkable circumstance in the figure of Chiron is his reposing his hinder parts on his left haunch upon the ground. Yet this attitude; as well as the other particulars mentioned above, is expressed in an antique gem, of which I have seen a copy at Rome.

I shall conclude this paper with an account of the statues, which stand in several rooms adjoining to the unfinished part of the palace, and were found (as to the far greater number) at or near Herculaneum.

*In the First Room.*

An equestrian marble statue of M. Nonius Balbus the elder, which is intended to be placed in a large entrance on the east side of the palace, to answer to that of his son, which is already set up on the other side, facing the bay of Naples.

*In the Second.*

Nero and Germanicus, considerably larger than the life, but squeezed somewhat flat by the weight of the lava, or other ruins, with which they were once overwhelmed.

A man in a sacrificing habit.

Two others in the toga, and two women in the palla.

All these are of bronze.

Statues of marble deposited here are the following, *viz.*

At the entrance, a matron larger than nature, with strong expression in her face.

Two colossal trunks in a sitting posture.

Three statues of one of the Agrippina's.

A Roman matron, or empress, with remains of red painting on the extremities of her palla.

Three other matrons.

*In the Third Room.*

Bacchus. A muse. A fragment of a statue in the pallium. A fine statua togata with the head veiled, larger than the life.

Another very remarkable figure, whose face resembles in beauty that commonly attributed to Venus, tho' the dress and other insignia plainly indicate a Pallas: for her head is covered with an helmet, below which her hair falls down long and dishevelled. Her left arm is enveloped with her ægis, which is large and expanded, so as to form a kind of mantle. Her garments are thin, and fit close to her body in strait plaits. She is in a posture of running, or striding, with her feet at a considerable distance from each other, and her arms extended different ways; an attitude strongly marking the utmost eagerness and haste.

Next appears a Vertumnus. A fine figure of a philosopher. Volumnia and Veturius. A lady with a thin stola. A Venus. A boy of exquisite workmanship. A small statua togata.

In another part is a Faun of bronze, reclined, with his right hand lifted up, and his leg extended. This figure (as we were informed) was found accompanied with seven others of the same metal, which now stand in another chamber, viz. two young men in a running a posture; four females somewhat resembling

resembling vestals in their habit, excepting that all their heads were uncovered, and those of two of them were adorned with *vittæ*, or filets. Lastly, a young man of a small size, cloathed, with his arms somewhat extended.

There remains but one more figure to be taken notice of in this collection, *viz.* that of Serapis, with Cerberus at his right hand. Ancient writers (21) enable us to account for this appearance, by informing us, that Serapis (besides his other characters of Æsculapius, Sol, Osiris, and Jupiter) was accounted the same as Dis Pater, or Pluto. Upon this hypothesis none can doubt of the propriety of Cerberus's attending upon this deity in the figure before us, as well as in three others given us by Montfaucon (22).

If we desire to enter into the mystical reason of this representation, we may learn it from Porphyry, *viz.* that Serapis (23), being the same as Pluto, had dominion over the evil dæmons; and that those beings were figured by a dog with three heads; meaning the dæmon subsisting in the three elements of water, earth, and air.

Give me leave to add further, that I find, by my journal, that upon viewing this figure, I took notice of a dissimilitude in the heads of it: but as it did

(21) *Deum ipsum (Serapidem) multi Æsculapium --- quidam Osirim — plerique Jovem — plurimi Ditem patrem insignibus, quæ in ipso manifesta, aut per ambages, conjeſtant.* Tac. Hist. L. iv. Εἰς Ζεὺς, εἰς Αἰδὼς, εἰς Ἥρατος εἰς Σάραπιν, Oraculum Apollinis apud M. A. Cauf. Museum Rom. vol. ii. §. 6. tab. 13.

(22) Antiq. T. ii. P. 2. pl. 121, 122.

(23) Porphyr. apud Euseb. Præp. Evang. L. iv. c. 23. Τὸς δὲ πονηρὰς δαίμονας ἐκ ἐκκὴ ὑπὸ Σάραπιν ὑποτίθειμεν, &c.

not then occur to me, that they were ever expressed in any other form than the canine, I did not examine minutely into the difference : but, upon recollection, I am now inclined to think, that that monster might have the heads of three several animals in this piece, as he has in another, given us by (24) Montfaucon : which mode of exhibiting him was (according to that learned (25) antiquary) invented by the Egyptians ; a circumstance not to be wondered at in a people, whose imagination teemed so plentifully with monstrous ideas of all kinds, as theirs is known to have done.

To the same original we may refer the serpent twisting round Cerberus in this monument ; as we see two of the same species encircling his heads and body in that mentioned above (26). As I know no particular relation, that the serpent bears to Serapis, considered as Pluto, I can regard it here only as a sacred symbol in the theology of the ancient Egyptians ; and, as such, properly attributed to an attendant of one of their chief divinities.

I shall trouble you but with one more observation upon this article, *viz.* that (if I may trust my memory for a particular omitted in my notes) this is the statue, which being the principal one found in an ancient magnificent building discovered about seven years ago at (27) Pozzuoli (in conjunction with other circumstances) occasioned it to be called The Temple of

(24) Suppl. T. ii. L. vi. c. 10. Tab. xlviii.

(25) Montfaucon, *ibid.*

(26) Montfaucon, *ibid.*

(27) Vid. Observations sur les Antiquités d'Herculaneum, &c. par Mess. Cochin & Bellicard, p. 83. Paris 1755.



Serapis. As this place seemed greatly to merit the attention of the curious in antiquity, we procured a plan of it, drawn by a native, who has free access to it; and (if I thought it would be acceptable to that learned Society, of which I have the honour to be a member) the said plan should wait upon them, accompanied with some observations upon it by,

S I R,

Your most obedient,

London, Feb. 24.  
1757.

humble Servant,

John Nixon.

*P. S.* A long room is designed to be fitted up in the King's palace at Portici, for the reception of all the antiquities found at Herculaneum, &c. This apartment will be lighted by thirteen windows on the side towards the Cortile, and adorned with forty columns, partly of verde antique, partly of alabaster with brownish veins, and other beautiful marbles, found in divers parts of the King's dominions. Between every two of these columns will be placed a group, statue, or bust. The compartments in the walls will contain the ancient paintings. The other curiosities are to be deposited in cases made for that purpose; and the pavement will consist intirely of the finest pieces of Mosaic work, that have been found in Herculaneum, or any places within the Neapolitan state.